

Where does the rabbit hole end?

“I can’t go back to yesterday because I was a different person then.”

— Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

I don’t think I was quite prepared for what would happen to me as a learner, educator, and person as I worked my way through Michigan State’s Masters of Art in Educational Technology program while also working as a full-time teacher. I was happy to find a program that’s content actually interested me and I felt was immediately applicable to my teaching, but I was still wondering what I would get out of it and where it would take me when I was finished. As the end is very near I look back and realize everything I’ve accomplished and how my perspective on technology and teaching has completely changed. I’m not the same teacher I was before my Master’s program and my evolution has really only just begun.

One of the first evolutions in my teaching and learning was my personal learning network (PLN). My PLN used to be only what I could gather from immediate peers and whatever book I decided to read at the moment. However, I grew up in an age where social media had just begun to develop and I looked at it as simply a place to connect with friends and family. Now there is a very real place for social media in my professional development and students’ learning. Twitter has become my resource and skill discovery center (along with the occasional funny YouTube video). By selecting people and institutions I know to be active in education I no longer have to search for great ideas, they simply show up in my feed by the hour. Not only can I find resources, but share what I’ve created or discovered with the world often in hopes of building upon great ideas. As I continue in my career as an educator my PLN will become what I’m willing to make it. I doubt Twitter will be the final frontier and I know I will not be afraid to look at how the next great technology will be useful to my students and my teaching as well as my personal life.

Solving problems with technology has been another evolution of my skill set working throughout the MAET program. My first few years teaching I found myself using technology in the classroom for the wrong reasons. I would have students create a PowerPoint or Google Presentation of an assignment that I felt was boring to change things up and make it more exciting, but adding that use of technology wasn’t helping my students learn it was doing the same boring, ineffective assignment on a computer. I have now learned to look at what I want and expect my students to learn and then evaluate if and what technology could assist in that goal. Solving a Wicked Problem Project in CEP 812 was the culmination of this new attitude. I had a lack of time and resources in which to teach science, yet it was still a requirement. I settled on using a WebQuest in which to utilize the technology and resources available to me and my students in order to accomplish my goals at hand. Currently and in the future I will not hesitate to avoid using technology without purpose, even if it challenges past practices. I now have a growing skill set

and resource list at my disposal which I plan on using effectively.

Nearing the end of my work in the MAET program I think I have realized one of my most important evolutions: education is everywhere! In order to be a truly well-rounded educator I cannot limit myself to ideas only contained in the educational realm. My work in CEP 815 was an eye-opening course in analyzing leadership skills and how they could be applied to education. Insights from other realms, such as the business-world, can prove invaluable in their application to education. When looking at what makes a good and effective leader, what better place than the world of bottom lines? Education is quickly becoming a world of data and results and to be effective we need to be able to leave old models behind and move forward with new ideas. My work in educational research has shown me that ideas are a dime a dozen and it takes the right questions to determine where we go from here. I am confident that there is no better way to adapt education than by the use of technology and teachers cannot sit by and have policy makers tell them what's best. Administrators and teachers need to work changes from the ground up and create these new environments that prepare students for success in all realms of our global marketplace.

As my work in the MAET program comes to an end is my evolution complete? I can't imagine technology is going to stand still and therefore neither can I. As I stated earlier I now have acquired an amazing skill set that enables me to grow professionally from just about anywhere and a drive has been instilled in me that won't be fulfilled unless I keep growing and changing. One thing I am unsure of is if this growth and evolution will keep me in the classroom. I'm sure I can practice what I preach from my classroom, but maybe I can do more. That may be as simple as a new position in my district or might be bigger than that. My future as a learner is one that will not stop anytime soon and I am excited to see where it takes me.